

# **Water Saving Tips for Health Care Facilities**

## **GENERAL SUGGESTIONS**

- Increase employee awareness of water conservation.
- Seek employee suggestions on water conservation.
- Conduct contests for employees (e.g., posters, slogans, or conservation ideas).
- Determine other methods of water conservation.
- Install signs encouraging water conservation in employee and customer restrooms.
- When cleaning with water is necessary, use budgeted amounts.
- Read water meter weekly to monitor success of water conservation efforts.
- Assign an employee to monitor water use and waste.
- Determine the quantity and purpose of water being used.
- Install signs encouraging water conservation in patient and non-patient rooms and restrooms.
- Use paper cups for drinking water instead of free-flowing drinking fountains.

## **BUILDING MAINTENANCE**

- Check water supply system for leaks and turn off any unnecessary flows.
- Repair dripping faucets, showers and continuously running or leaking toilets.
- Reduce the water used in toilet flushing by either adjusting the vacuum flush mechanism or installing toilet tank displacement devices (dams, bottles, or bags).
- Install flow reducers and faucet aerators in all plumbing fixtures whenever possible.
- As fixtures wear out, replace them with water saving models.
- Shut off water supply to equipment and rooms not in use.
- Discontinue water circulation pumping in unoccupied areas.
- Ensure return of steam condensate to the feed water tank for re-use.
- Shut off spray coil units, except where humidity in critical areas cannot be maintained by other means, or where the units are used to reduce chiller operation.
- Keep hot water pipes insulated.
- Avoid excessive boiler and air conditioner blow down. Monitor total dissolved solids levels and blow down only when needed.
- Minimize the water used in cooling equipment, such as air compressors, in accordance with the manufacturer recommendations.

## **CAFETERIA AND KITCHEN AREAS**

- Turn off the continuous flow used to clean the drain trays of the coffee/milk/soda beverage island.
- Turn dishwasher off when not in use. Wash full loads only.
- Use water from steam tables to wash down cooking area.
- Do not use running water to melt ice or frozen foods. If necessary, use ponded water.
- Use water-conserving ice-makers.
- Provide table signs in cafeteria urging water conservation.
- Wash vegetables in ponded water; do not let water run in preparation sink.
- Recycle rinse water from the dishwater.

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## LAUNDRY FACILITIES

- Reprogram machines to eliminate a rinse or suds cycle, if possible, and not restricted by health regulations.
- Reduce water levels, where possible, to minimize water required per load of washing.
- Wash full loads only.
- Evaluate wash formula and machine cycles for water use efficiency.

## OPERATIONS

- Turn off water required for film processing or cooling in the X-ray department when not in use.
- Recycle water where feasible, consistent with state and county requirements.
- Use full loads in sanitizer, sterilizer, dishwasher, and washing machine consistent with infection control requirements.
- Overhaul faulty steam traps on sterilizers.
- As appliances or fixtures wear out, replace with water-saving models.
- Reduce the load on air conditioning units by shutting off air conditioning when and where it is not needed.
- Recover condensate from air conditioners, refrigerators, freezers, and ice machines; use it as make-up water.

## EXTERIOR AREAS

- Inventory outdoor water use for landscaped areas.
- Do not water landscape every day; only water when needed. If water restrictions are in effect, adapt your watering schedule accordingly.
- Wash autos, buses, and trucks less often.
- Don't use water to clean sidewalks, driveways, loading docks, and parking lots.
- Consider using brooms or motorized sweepers.
- Wash autos, buses, and trucks less often.
- Avoid plant fertilizing and pruning that would stimulate excessive growth.
- Remove unhealthy plants so remaining plants can benefit from the water saved.
- In many cases, older, established plants require only infrequent irrigation. Look for indications of water need, such as wilt, change of color, or dry soils.
- Install soil moisture overrides or timers on sprinkler systems. Time watering, when possible, to occur in the early morning or evening when evaporation is lowest.
- Irrigation equipment should apply water uniformly.
- Investigate the advantages of installing drip irrigation systems.
- Mulch around plants to reduce evaporation and discourage weeds.
- Remove thatch and aerate turf to encourage the movement of water to the root zone.
- Avoid runoff and make sure sprinklers cover just the lawn or garden, not sidewalks, driveways, or gutters.
- Do not water on windy days.

*(SOURCE: Maryland Department of the Environment)*